CHEAP EDITION.

AUTHENTIC COPY

OF A

PETITION

PRAYING FOR

A REFORM IN PARLIAMENT,

PRESENTED TO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

On MONDAY, 6th MAY, 1793.

PUBLISHED BY

THE SOCIETY, THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE,

Associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

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PETITION, &c.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled;

THE HUMBLE PETITION, &c. SHEWETH,

THAT by the form and ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution, the King is veſted with the ſole Executive Power.

That the Houſe of Lords conſiſts of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, deriving their titles and conſequence either from the Crown, or from Hereditary Privileges.

That theſe two powers, if they acted without controul, would form either a deſpotic Monarchy, or a dangerous Oligarchy.

That the wiſdom of our Anceſtors hath contrived, that theſe authorities may be rendered not only harmleſs, but beneficial, and be exerciſed for the ſecurity and happineſs of the People.

That this ſecurity and happineſs are to be looked for in the introduction of a Third Eſtate, diſtinct from, and a check upon the other two branches of the Legiſlature, created by repreſenting, and reſponſible to the People themſelves.

That ſo much depending upon the preſervation of this Third Eſtate in ſuch its conſtitutional purity and ſtrength, your Petitioners are reaſonably jealous of whatever may appear to vitiate the one, or to impair the other.

That at the preſent day the Houſe of Commons does not fully and fairly repreſent the People of England, which conſiſtently with what your Petitioners conceive to be the principles of the Conſtitution, they conſider as a grievance, and therefore, with all becoming reſpect, lay their complaints before your Honourable Houſe.

That though the terms in which your Petitioners ſtate their grievance may be looked upon as ſtrong, yet your Honourable Houſe is entreated to believe that no expreſſion is made uſe of for the purpoſe of offence.

Your Petitioners in affirming that your Honourable Houſe is not an adequate Repreſentation of the People of England, do but ſtate a fact, which, if the word "Repreſentation" be accepted in its fair and obvious ſenſe, they are ready to prove, and which they think detrimental to their intereſts, and contrary to the ſpirit of the Conſtitution.

How far this inadequate Repreſentation is prejudicial to their intereſts, your Petitioners apprehend they may be allowed to decide for themſelves; but how far it is contrary to the ſpirit of the Conſtitution, they refer to the conſideration of your Honourable Houſe.

If your Honourable Houſe ſhall be pleaſed to determine that the People of England ought not to be fully repreſented, your Petitioners pray that ſuch your determination may be made known, to the end that the People may be apprized of their real ſituation; but if your Honourable Houſe ſhall conceive that the People are already fully repreſented, then your Petitioners beg leave to call your attention to the following facts:

Your Petitioners complain, that the number of Repreſentatives aſſigned to the different Counties is groſsly diſproportioned to their comparative Extent, Population and Trade.

Your Petitioners complain, that the Elective Franchiſe is ſo partially and unequally diſtributed, and is in ſo many inſtances committed to bodies of men of ſuch very limited numbers, that the Majority of your Honourable Houſe is elected by leſs than fifteen thouſand Electors, which, even if the male adults in the kingdom be eſtimated at ſo low a number as three millions, is not more than the two hundreth part of the people to be repreſented.

Your Petitioners complain, that the right of voting is regulated by no uniform or rational principle.

Your Petitioners complain, that the exerciſe of the Elective Franchiſe is only renewed once in Seven Years.

Your Petitioners thus diſtinctly ſtate the ſubject matter of their complaints, that your Honourable Houſe may be convinced that they are acting from no ſpirit of general diſcontent, and that you may with the more eaſe be enabled to enquire into the facts, and to apply the remedy.

FOR the evidence in ſupport of the FIRST COMPLAINT, your Petitioners refer to the Return Book of your Honourable Houſe.—Is it fitting, that Rutland and Yorkſhire ſhould bear an equal rank in the ſcale of County Repreſentation; or can it be right, that Cornwall alone ſhould, by its extravagant proportion of Borough Members, outnumber not only the Repreſentatives of Yorkſhire and Rutland together, but of Middleſex added to them? Or, if a diſtinction be taken between the landed and the trading Intereſts, muſt it not appear monſtrous, that Cornwall and Wiltſhire ſhould ſend more Borough Members to Parliament, than Yorkſhire, Lancaſhire, Warwickſhire, Middleſex, Worceſterſhire, and Somerſetſhire united? and that the total Repreſentation of all Scotland ſhould but exceed by one Member, the number returned for a ſingle County in England?

The SECOND COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is founded on the unequal proportions in which the Elective Franchiſe is diſtributed, and in ſupport of it,

They affirm, that ſeventy of your Hon. Members are returned by thirty-five places, where the right of voting is veſted in Burgage or other Tenures of a ſimilar deſcription, and in which it would be to triſle with the patience of your Honourable Houſe, to mention any number of voters whatever, the elections at the places alluded to, being notoriouſly a mere matter of form. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the ſeventy Honourable Members ſo choſen, ninety more of your Honourable Members are elected by forty-ſix places, in none of which the number of voters exceed fifty. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ſixty ſo elected, thirty ſeven more of your Honourable Members are elected by nineteen places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds one hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ninety ſeven Honourable Members ſo choſen, fifty-two more are returned to ſerve in Parliament, by twenty ſix places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds two hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and forty-nine ſo elected, twenty more are returned to ſerve in Parliament for counties in Scotland, by leſs than one hundred Electors each, and ten for counties in Scotland by leſs than two hundred and fifty each. And

this your Petitioners are ready to prove, even admitting the validity of fictitious votes.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and seventy nine ſo elected, thirteen diſtricts of Burghs in Scotland, not containing one hundred voters each, and two diſtricts of Burghs, not containing one hundred and twenty-five each, return fifteen more Honourable Members. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

And in this manner, according to the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation, two hundred and ninety-four of your Honourable Members are choſen, and, being a majority of the entire Houſe of Commons, are enabled to decide all queſtions in the name of the whole people of England and Scotland.

THE THIRD COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is founded on the preſent complicated rights of voting. From the caprice with which they have been varied, and the obſcurity in which they have become involved by time and contradictory deciſions, they are become a ſource of infinite confuſion, litigation, and expence.

Your Petitioners need not tender any evidence of the inconveniences which ariſe from this defect in the Repreſentation, becauſe the proof is to be found in your Journals, and the Minutes of the different Committees who have been appointed under the 10th and 11th of the King. Your Honourable Houſe is but too well acquainted with the tedious, intricate, and expenſive ſcenes of litigation which have been brought before you, in attempting to ſettle the legal import of thoſe numerous diſtinctions which perplex and confound the preſent rights of voting. How many months of your valuable time have been waſted in liſtening to the wrangling of Lawyers upon the various ſpecies of Burgageholds, Leaſeholds, and Freeholds! How many Committees have been occupied in inveſtigating the nature of Scot and Lot, Potwallers, Commonalty, Populacy, reſiant Inhabitants and Inhabitants at large! What labour and reſearch have been employed in endeavouring to aſcertain the legal claims of Borough-men, Aldermen, Poſt-men, Select-men, Burgeſſes, and Council-men! And what confuſion has ariſen from the complicated operation of claſhing Charters, from Freemen reſident and non-reſident, and from the different modes of obtaining the freedom of Corporations by birth, by ſervitude, by marriage, by redemption, by election, and by purchaſe! On all theſe points it is however needleſs for your Petitioners to enlarge, when your Honourable Houſe recollect the following facts; namely, that ſince the twenty-ſecond of December, 1790, no leſs than twenty one Committees have been employed in deciding upon litigated rights of voting. Of theſe, eight were occupied with the diſputes of three Boroughs, and there are Petitions from four places yet remaining before your Honourable Houſe, waiting for a final deciſion to inform the Electors what their rights really are.

BUT the complaint of your Petitioners on the ſubject of the want of an uniform and equitable principle in regulating the right of voting, extends as well to the arbitrary manner in which ſome are excluded, as to the intricate qualifications by which others are admitted to the exerciſe of that privilege.

Religious Opinions create an incapacity to vote. All Papiſts are excluded generally, and, by the operation of the Teſt Laws, Proteſtant Diſſenters are deprived of a voice in the election of Repreſentatives in about thirty Boroughs, where the right of voting is confined to Corporate Officers alone; a deprivation the more unjuſtifiable, becauſe, though conſidered as unworthy to vote, they are deemed ca-

pable of bing elected, and may be the Repreſentatives of the very places for which they are diſqualified from being the electors.

A man poſſeſſed of one thouſand pounds per annum, or any other ſum, ariſing from copyhold, leaſehold for ninety-nine years, trade, property in the Public Funds, or even freehold in the city of London, and many other cities and towns having peculiar juriſdictions, is not thereby entitled to vote. Here again a ſtrange diſtinction is taken between electing and repreſenting, as a copyhold is a ſufficient qualification to ſit in your Honourable Houſe.

A man paying taxes to any amount, how great ſoever, for his domeſtic eſtabliſhment, does not thereby obtain a right to vote, unleſs his reſidence be in ſome borough where that right is veſted in the inhabitants. This exception operates in ſixty places, of which twenty-eight do not contain three hundred voters each, and the number of houſeholders in England and Wales (excluſive of Scotland), who pay all taxes, is 714,911, and of houſeholders who pay all Taxes, but the Houſe and Window Taxes, is 284,459, as appears by a return made to your Honourable Houſe in 1785: ſo that, even ſuppoſing the ſixty places abovementioned to contain, one with another, one thouſand voters in each, there will remain 939,370 houſeholders who have no voice in the Repreſentation, unleſs they have obtained it by accident or by purchaſe. Neither their contributions to the public burdens, their peaceable demeanor as good ſubjects, nor their general reſpectability and merit as uſeful citizens, afford them, as the law now ſtands, the ſmalleſt pretenſions to participate in the choice of thoſe, who, under the name of their Repreſentatives, may diſpoſe of their fortunes and liberties.

In Scotland the grievance ariſing from the nature of the rights of voting, has a different and ſtill more intolerable operation. In that great and populous diviſion of the kingdom, not only the great maſs of the houſeholders, but of the land-holders alſo, are excluded from all participation in the choice of Repreſentatives. By the remains of the feudal ſyſtem in the counties, the vote is ſevered from the land, and attached to what is called the ſuperiority. In other words it is taken from the ſubſtance, and transferred to the ſhadow, becauſe, though each of theſe ſuperiorities muſt, with very few exceptions, ariſe from lands of the preſent annual value of four hundred pounds ſterling, yet it is not neceſſary that the lands ſhould do more than give a name to the ſuperiority, the poſſeſſor of which may retain the right of voting notwithſtanding he be diveſted of the property. And on the other hand, great landholders have the means afforded them by the ſame ſyſtem, of adding to their influence, without expence to themſelves, by communicating to their confidential friends the privilege of electing Members to ſerve in Parliament. The proceſs by which this operation is performed is ſimple. He who wiſhes to increaſe the number of his dependant votes, ſurrenders his charter to the Crown, and parcelling out his eſtate into as many lots of four hundred pounds per annum, as may be convenient, conveys them to ſuch as he can confide in. To theſe, new charters are, upon application, granted by the Crown, ſo as to erect each of them into a ſuperiority, which privilege once obtained, the land itſelf is reconveyed to the original grantor; and thus the Repreſentatives of the landed intereſt in Scotland may be choſen by thoſe who have no real or beneficial intereſt in the land.

Such is the ſituation in which the Counties of Scotland are placed. With reſpect to the Burghs, every thing that bears even the ſemblance

of popular choice, has long been done away. The election of Members to ſerve in Parliament is veſted in the Magiſtrates and Town-Councils, who, having by various innovations, conſtituted themſelves into ſelf-elected bodies, in ſtead of Officers freely choſen by the inhabitants at large, have deprived the People of all participation in that privilege, the free exerciſe of which affords the only ſecurity they can poſſeſs for the protection of their liberties and property.

The FOURTH and LAST COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is the length of the duration of Parliaments. Your Honourable Houſe knows, that by the ancient laws and ſtatutes of this kingdom, frequent Parliaments ought to be held; and that the ſixth of William and Mary, c. 2. (ſince repealed) ſpeaking while the ſpirit of the Revolution was yet warm, declared, that "frequent and new Parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good agreement between King and People;" and enacted, that no Parliament ſhould laſt longer than three years. Your Petitioners, without preſuming to add to ſuch an authority by any obſervations of their own, humbly pray that Parliaments may not be continued for ſeven years.

YOUR PETITIONERS have thus laid before you, the ſpecific grounds of complaint, from which they conceive every evil in the Repreſentation to ſpring, and on which they think every abuſe and inconvenience is founded.

What thoſe abuſes are, and how great that inconvenience is, it becomes your Petitioners to ſtate, as the beſt means of juſtifying their preſent application to your Honourable Houſe.

YOUR Petitioners then affirm, that from the combined operation of the defects they have pointed out, ariſe thoſe ſcenes of confuſion, litigation and expence, which ſo diſgrace the name, and that extenſive ſyſtem of private patronage, which is ſo repugnant to the ſpirit of free Repreſentation.

YOUR Petitioners intreat of your Honourable Houſe to conſider the manner in which elections are conducted, and to reflect upon the extreme inconvenience to which electors are expoſed, and the intolerable expence to which candidates are ſubjected.

Your Honourable Houſe knows that tumults, diſorders, outrages, and periury, are often the dreadful attendants on conteſted elections as at this time carried on.

Your Honourable Houſe knows that polls are only taken in one fixed place for each county, city, and borough, whether the voters be ten or ten thouſand, and whether they be reſident or diſperſed over England.

Your Honourable Houſe knows that Polls, however few the Electors, may by law be continued for fifteen days, and even then be ſubjected to a ſcrutiny.

Your Honourable Houſe knows that the management and conduct of polls is committed to returning officers, who, from the very nature of the proceedings, muſt be inveſted with extenſive and diſcretionary powers, and who, it appears by every volume of your Journals, have but too often exerciſed thoſe powers with the moſt groſs partiality and the moſt ſcandalous corruption.

Of elections arranged with ſuch little regard to the accommodation of the parties, acknowledged to require ſuch a length of time to complete, and truſted to the ſuperintendence of ſuch ſuſpicious agents, your Petitioners might eaſily draw out a detail of the expence. But it is unneceſſary. The fact is too notorious to require proof, that

ſcarce an inſtance can be produced, where a Member has obtained a diſputed ſeat in Parliament, at a leſs coſt than from two to five thouſand pounds; particular caſes are not wanting where ten times theſe ſums have been paid, but it is ſufficient for your Petitioners to affirm, and to be able to prove it if denied, that, ſuch is the expence of a conteſted return, that he who ſhould become a Candidate with even greater funds than the law requires him to ſwear to as his qualification to ſit in your Honourable Houſe, muſt either relinquiſh his pretenſions on the appearance of an oppoſition, or ſo reduce his fortune in the conteſt, that he could not take his ſeat without perjury.

THE reviſion of the original polls before the Committees of your Honourable Houſe upon appeals from the deciſion of the returning officers, affords a freſh ſource of vexation and expence to all parties. Your honourable Houſe knows, that the complicated rights of voting, and the ſhameful practices which diſgrace election proceedings, have ſo loaded your table with Petitions for judgment and redreſs, that one half of the uſual duration of a Parliament, has ſcarcely been ſufficient to ſettle who is entitled to ſit for the other half; and it was not till within the laſt two months, that your Honourable Houſe had an opportunity of diſcovering, that the two Gentlemen, who ſat and voted near three years as the Repreſentatives of the Borough of Stockbridge, had procured themſelves to be elected by the moſt ſcandalous bribery, and that the two Gentlemen who ſat and voted during as long a period for the Borough of Great Grimſby, had not been elected at all.

In truth all the miſchiefs of the preſent ſyſtem of Repreſentation are aſcertained by the difficulties which even the zeal and wiſdom of your Honourable Houſe experience in attending to the variety of complaints brought before you. Though your Committees ſit five hours every day from the time of their appointment, they generally are unable to come to a deciſion in leſs than a fortnight, and very frequently are detained from thirty to forty days. The Weſtminſter caſe in 1789, will even furniſh your Honourable Houſe with an inſtance, where, after deliberating forty-five days a Committee gravely reſolved, that, "from an attentive conſideration of the circumſtances relating to the cauſe, a final deciſion of the buſineſs before "them could not take place in the courſe of the Seſſion, and that not "improbably the whole of the Parliament, (having at that time near two years longer to ſit) "might be conſumed in a tedious and expenſive litigation;" and they recommended it to the Petitioners to withdraw their Petition, which, after a fruitleſs perſeverance of above three months, they were actually obliged to ſubmit to.

Your Petitioners will only upon this ſubject further add, that the expence to each of the parties, who have been either Plaintiff or Defendant in Petitions tried before your Honourable Houſe in the preſent Seſſion, has upon an average, amounted to above one hundred pounds per day; and that the Attornies' Bills in one cauſe, the trial of which in point of form only laſted two days, and in point of fact only ſix hours, amounted to very near twelve hundred pounds. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

YOUR PETITIONERS muſt now beg leave to call the attention of the Houſe to the greateſt evil produced by theſe defects in the Repreſentation of which they complain, namely, the extent of PRIVATE PARLIAMENTARY PATRONAGE: an abuſe which obviouſly tends to exclude the great maſs of the people from any ſubſtantial influence in the Election of the Houſe of Commons, and which, in its progreſs,

threatens to uſurp the ſovereignty of the country, to the equal danger of the King, of the Lords, and of the Commons.

The Patronage of which your Petitioners complain, is of two kinds: THAT which ariſes from the unequal diſtribution of the Elective Franchiſe, and the peculiar rights of voting by which certain places return Members to ſerve in Parliament: and THAT which ariſes from the expence attending conteſted Elections, and the conſequent degree of power acquired by wealth.

By theſe two means, a weight of Parliamentary Influence has been obtained by certain individuals, forbidden by the ſpirit of the laws, and in its conſequences moſt dangerous to the Liberties of the People of Great Britain.

The operation of the FIRST ſpecies of Patronage is direct, and ſubject to poſitive proof. EIGHTY-FOUR individuals do by their own immediate authority ſend ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN of your Honourable Members to Parliament. And this your Petitioners are ready, if the fact be diſputed, to prove, and to name the Members and the Patrons.

The SECOND ſpecies of Patronage cannot be ſhewn with equal accuracy, though it is felt with equal force.

Your Petitioners are convinced, that in addition to the one hundred and fifty-ſeven Honourable Members above-mentioned, one hundred and fifty more, making in the whole THREE HUNDRED AND SEVEN, are returned to your Honourable Houſe, not by the collected voice of thoſe whom they appear to repreſent, but by the recommendation of ſeventy powerful individuals, added to the eighty-four before-mentioned, and making the total number of Patrons altogether only ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR, who return a DECIDED MAJORITY of your Honorable Houſe.

If your Honourable Houſe will accept as evidence the common report and general belief of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, which return the Members alluded to, your Petitioners are ready to name them, and to prove the fact; or if the Members in queſtion can be made parties to the enquiry, your Petitioners will name them, and be governed by the teſtimony which they themſelves ſhall publicly give. But if neither of theſe proofs be thought conſiſtent with the proceedings of your Honourable Houſe, then your Petitioners can only aſſert their belief of the fact, which they hereby do in the moſt ſolemn manner, and on the moſt deliberate conviction.

Your Petitioners entreat your Honourable Houſe to believe that, in complaining of this ſpecies of influence, it is not their intention or deſire to decry, or to condemn that juſt and natural attachment which they, who are enabled by their fortune, and inclined by their diſpoſition, to apply great means to honourable and benevolent ends, will always inſure to themſelves. What your Petitioners complain of is, that property, whether well or ill employed, has equal power; that the preſent ſyſtem of Repreſentation gives to it a degree of weight which renders it independent of character; enables it to command as well as procure reſpect, and confines the choice of Electors within the ranks of opulence, becauſe though it cannot make riches the ſole object of their affection and confidence, it can and does throw obſtacles, almoſt inſurmountable, in the way of every man who is not rich, and thereby ſecures to a ſelect few the capability of becoming Candidates themſelves, or of ſupporting the pretenſions of others. Of this your Petitioners complain loudly, becauſe they conceive it to be highly unjuſt, that, while the language of the law requires from a

Candidate no greater Eſtate, as a qualification, than a few hundred pounds per annum, the operation of the law ſhould diſqualify every man whoſe rental is not extended to thouſands: and that, at the ſame time that the Legiſlature appears to give the Electors a choice from amongſt thoſe who poſſeſs a moderate and independent competence, it ſhould virtually compel them to chooſe from amongſt thoſe who themſelves abound in wealth, or are ſupported by the wealth of others.

YOUR PETITIONERS are the more alarmed at the progreſs of private patronage, becauſe it is rapidly leading to conſequences which menace the very exiſtence of the Conſtitution.

At the commencement of every ſeſſion of Parliament, your Honourable Houſe acting up to the laudable jealouſy of your predeceſſors, and ſpeaking the pure conſtitutional language of a Britiſh Houſe of Commons, reſolve, as appears by your journals, "That "no Peer of this realm hath any right to give his vote in the "Election of any Member to ſerve in Parliament;" and alſo, "That "it is a high infringement upon the liberties and privileges of the "Commons of Great-Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any "Lord Lieutenant of any County, to concern themſelves in the "Elections of Members to ſerve for the Commons in Parliament."

Your Petitioners inform your Honourable Houſe, and are ready to prove it at your Bar, that they have the moſt reaſonable grounds to ſuſpect that no leſs than ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY OF your Honourable Members owe their Elections entirely to the interference of PEERS; and your Petitioners are prepared to ſhew by legal evidence, that forty PEERS, in defiance of your reſolutions, have poſſeſſed themſelves of ſo many Borough Tenures, and obtained ſuch an abſolute and uncontrouled command in every many ſmall Boroughs in the kingdom, as to be enabled by their own poſitive authority to return EIGHTY-ONE of your Honourable Members.

Your Petitioners will, however, urge this grievance of the interference of PEERS in Elections no further, becauſe they are ſatisfied that it is unneceſſary. Members of your Honourable Houſe muſt individually have known the fact, but collectively your Honourable Houſe has unfortunately been a ſtranger to it. It is now brought before you by thoſe who require evidence of the truth of what they aſſert, and they conceive it would be improper in them to aſk that by Petition, which muſt be looked for as the certain reſult of your own honourable attachment to your own liberties and privileges.

YOUR PETITIONERS have this laſt before your Honourable Houſe, what the miſchiefs are which ariſe from the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation, and what they conceive to be the grounds of thoſe miſchiefs, and therefore pray to have removed.

They now humbly beg leave to offer their reaſons, why they are anxious that ſome remedy ſhould be immediately applied.

YOUR PETITIONERS muſt they may be allowed to ſtate, becauſe they are ready to prove, that ſeats in your Honourable Houſe are bought for at a moſt extravagant and increaſing rate of expence.

What can have ſo rapidly augmented the ambition to ſit in your Honourable Houſe, your Petitioners do not preſume actually to have diſcovered, but the means taken by Candidates to obtain, and by Electors to beſtow that honour, evidently appear to have been increaſing in a progreſſive degree of fraud and corruption. Your Petitioners are induced to make this aſſertion by the Legiſlature having found it neceſſary, during the laſt and preſent reigns, ſo much to ſwell the Statute Book with laws for the prevention of thoſe offences.

As far as conjecture can lead your Petitioners, they must suppose, that the increased National Debt, and the consequent increase of influence, are the causes of the encreased eagerness of individuals to become Members of the House of Commons, and of their indifference as to the means used to gratify their ambition. To prove that they do not state this wantonly, or without substantial grounds, they humbly beg to call your attention to the following Table, all the vouchers for which are to be found in the Journals of your Honourable House, or in different Acts of Parliament.

At the Revolution	The Public Revenue did not exceed	£1,800,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom and independence of Parliament, to regulate Elections, and to prevent frauds, bribery, &c. did not exceed only to —	10
At the death of William III.	The Public Revenue had increased to about	£3,000,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to	26
At the death of Queen Anne.	The Public Revenue had increased to about	£5,000,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to	36
At the death of George I.	The Public Revenue had increased to about	£6,000,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to	37
At the death of George II.	The Public Revenue had increased to about	£8,000,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to	49
In the 9th year of the reign of his present Majesty	The Public Revenue had increased to above	£9,000,000	The number of Statutes found necessary to preserve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increased to	65

It is upon this evidence of the increaſe of taxes, eſtabliſhments, and influence, and the increaſe of laws found neceſſary to repel the increaſing attacks upon the purity and freedom of elections, that your Petitioners conceive [illegible] to enquire into the premiſes.

Your Pet[illegible] in what they have ſtated, they are [illegible] of facts, and they truſt that, in conveying [illegible] Honourable Houſe, they have not been [illegible] reproach or diſreſpect. Anxious to preſerve [illegible] a Conſtitution they love and admire, they have thought it [illegible] duty to lay before you, not only general ſpeculations deduced from theoretical opinions, but poſitive truths ſuſceptible of direct proof, and if in the performance of this taſk, they have been obliged to call your attention to aſſertions which you have not been accuſtomed to hear, and which they lament that they are compelled to make, they intreat the indulgence of your Honourable Houſe.

YOUR PETITIONERS will only further treſpaſs upon your time, while they recapitulate the objects of their prayer, which are,

That your Honourable Houſe will be pleaſed to take ſuch meaſures as to your wiſdom may ſeem meet, to remove the evils ariſing from the [illegible] manner in which the different parts of the kingdom [illegible] Repreſentation.

[illegible] of the Elective Franchiſe,

[illegible] natives to ſelect bodies of

[illegible] them an eaſy prey to the

[illegible] uniform and equitable

[illegible] by re-

[illegible] with

[illegible] new